combined MSF-RO desalination plant has been designed. It will utilise low pressure steam and is proposed to be set up at kalpakkam under the IX Plan subject to availability of funds. This plant will prove our indigenous capability of setting up large scale nuclear desalination plants in future.

Improvement in Nuclear Power Stations

2723. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any improvement in the serviceability and output of our nuclear power stations; and

(b) if so, what is the latest status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. concerted efforts have been made to improve the performance of the nuclear power plants and as a result, the performance has improved over the past two years. During 1995-96, NPCIL generated 7982 Million Units of electricity against annual target of 7950 MUs, achieving an overall annual capacity factor of 60%. During 1996-97, upto the end of February 97, 8166 MUs have been generated, 9000 MUs are expected to be generated during the whole year against the target of 7570 MUs. This would mean an annual capacity factor of 66%. The new generating units, namely, Narora Atomic Power Station and Kakrapar Atomic Power Station have achieved a capacity factor of 85% and 71% respectively during the year 1996-97 so far. Two reactors namely, Rajasthan Atomic Power Station (RAPS) units-1 & 2 are currently under shut down. RAPS unit-1 which is the first pressurised heavy water reactor in India, commissioned in 1972, has been shut down since February 1994 due to a minor out difficult-to-repair leak from the Over Pressure Relief Device (OPRD). The leak has been successfully repaired and the unit is expected to be back in operation shortly. RAPS unit-2 which has performed well during its commercial operation since April, 1981 upto July, 1994 and achieved a life time plant Load Factor of 60%, has been shut down since August, 1994 for an masse coolant channel replacement and upgradation of systems. These works are in the nature of capital maintenance which are progressing satisfactorily. RAPS-2 is expected to be brought back into operation during 1998. With the re-commissioning of these 2 units, a further generating capacity of 300 MWe would be added.

Gamma Sterilization Plants

2724. SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) how are the Gamma Sterilization Plants doing in our country;

(b) the number of such plants and where they are located;

(c) whether their output cater to the demand; and

(d) the other steps being taken in this area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) and (b) There are three gamma sterilization plants in the Country.

(i) 'Isomed' plant under Board of Radiation & Isotope Technology (BRIT), located at Trombay, Mumbai;

(ii) 'RASHMI' Radiation Sterilization Plant at Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bangalore; and

(iii) 'SARC' Radiation Plant at the SRIRAM Institute of Industrial Research, New Delhi.

The first two plants are operating with a capacity utilization factor of over 90% and the third at approximately 50%.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Technical assistance is being provided to private entrepreneurs for setting up such plants.

Functioning of GMRT

2725. SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the stage and level of functioning of the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research;

(b) whether it has become functional, if so, to what use it has been put; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to make the best and efficient use of this Telescope?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) The Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) being set up by TIFR, an aided Institution of the Department of Atomic Energy is in the final stages of completion. It consists of an array of 30 fully steerable parabolic dish antennas each with a diameter of 45 metres. The 30 dishes are installed over a region extending upto about 25 km near Narayangaon about 80 Km North of Pune. It is expected to become fully operational over the next few months.

(b) and (c) the Telescope will be used to carry out front-line fundamental research in astronomy and to study the properties of stars and galaxies and the large scale structure and evolution of the Universe. GMRT will be the largest and most powerful telescope in the world operating at metre wavelengths in the frequency range of 50-1500 MHz. The Department would ensure that this facility is put to the best and efficient use.

Setting up of New Atomic power plants

2726. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the atomic energy source is being expanded by augmenting the capacity of the existing atomic power plants and setting up of new such plants, in view of the depleting coal reserves in the country;

(b) the number of atomic power plants in the country at present, alongwith their location and power generating capacity and performance level; and

(c) the future plans for setting up of such plants during the Ninth Five Year Plan, with their proposed capacity and target dates for commissioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) to (c) Presently there are ten nuclear power reactors generating electricity in our country as given below:—